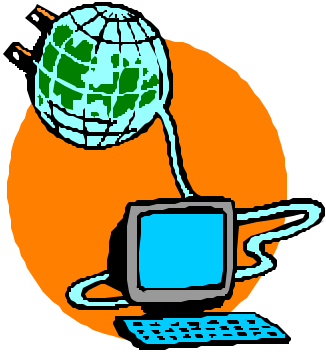


AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

Cambridge Firm Enhances Assistive Technology Websites



Cambridge-based iPhrase Technologies announced recently that its One Step natural language search and navigation platform has been chosen to power the search functions for the Accessible Technology Knowledgebase (ATKB). The Knowledgebase

provides timely, accurate and useful information about assistive technology and other disability-related subjects. Produced by the Information Technology Technical Assistance and Training Center (ITTATC) the Knowledgebase provides seamless access to disability information from the following five websites:

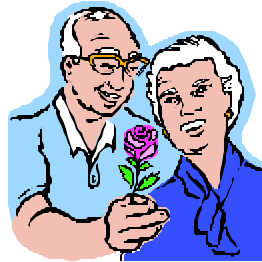
- AccessIT - <www.washington.edu/accessit>
- AssistiveTech.net - <www.assistivetech.net>
- DisabilityInfo.gov - <www.disabilityinfo.gov>
- ITTATC.org - <www.ittatc.org>
- Section508.gov - <www.section508.gov>

Advances in the electronic and information technology (E&IT) industries have revolutionized the way we work, play and communicate. These technologies have provided opportunity for some people but created barriers for others.

To address the barriers faced by people with disabilities, federal legislation has been enacted over the past several years, including Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and Section 255 of the Telecommunications Act. These laws require federal departments and agencies receiving federal funds to ensure equal access to E&IT-based information and services for their employees and members of the public with disabilities.

(Assistive Technology continued Page 2)

AARP Report: Americans Over 50 Lack Affordable Options to Maintain Independence



A new study from AARP reports that more than anything Americans over age 50 who have disabilities want to maintain independence and control in their daily lives, but they are too often thwarted by the lack of affordable options to help meet their needs. The

report, "Beyond 50 2003: A Report to the Nation on Independent Living and Disability," documents the gap between what they say they need and what is available as well as the absence of an organized system for delivering the services that do exist. It raises concerns that the U.S. is ill prepared to meet the demand for independence among people in this age group who will experience disabilities in the coming decades.

"Long-term independence for persons with disabilities is an increasingly achievable social goal," AARP Policy and Strategy Director John Rother said. "But it will require time and the collective creativity of the public and private sectors," he explained.

The "Beyond 50" report, the third in a series of annual AARP comprehensive studies on the status of Americans over age 50, found that almost half (46%) of 50-plus Americans with disabilities (including nearly 60 percent of those between the ages of 50 and 64) believe that having more control over decisions about services and the help they need would bring a major improvement in the quality of their lives. In the same vein, Americans 50+ with disabilities say their greatest fear is loss of independence and mobility.

Currently, about half (51%) of the people in this age range with disabilities are managing independently while the other half (49%) is receiving regular help with daily activities, such as cooking, bathing and shopping. However, nearly 25% said they need more assistance than they currently receive with daily activities.

(AARP Study continued Page 2)

(Assistive Technology continued)

"Until today, people with disabilities using assistive technology-equipped computers, such as screen readers and Braille devices, had to know how to use complicated Boolean logic to search these key disability-focused Web sites effectively. We developed a comprehensive intelligent knowledgebase of information from these federal resources, which users can query from the ITTATC Web portal," said Marti McCuller, CEO of Agassa Net Technologies, an ITTAC partner.

ITTATC is charged with providing accessibility training and technical assistance related to Sections 508 and 255. ITTATC wants to help its audiences - industry, state officials, trainers, and consumers - to understand the requirements of Sections 508 and 255 and to achieve success in their efforts to develop, market, and buy accessible E&IT.

One Step will power the ATKb in a manner that is fully accessible to Internet users employing the most popular assistive technology to "read" or otherwise interact with the contents of Web sites, databases and software applications.

"iPhrase's One Step effectively connects these resources and allows users to search all five federal websites simultaneously and get the specific information they need quickly," said Mimi Kessler, Project Director at ITTATC.

Using One Step on the ITTATC portal, site visitors are able to ask questions as though speaking with another person. Through the use of keywords, phrases or sentences, One Step will accurately interpret the meaning of the question and return specific information ranked by relevancy. The technology delivers only the results the user needs in a clear, concise actionable format, and draws from all types of data, documents and applications contained within the five sites.

(AARP Study continued)

Most of the help (88%) people reported receiving is volunteer assistance from family or other informal caregivers.

The "Beyond 50" report found that, on average, people with disabilities 50 and older give their community a grade of B-/C+ as a place that makes

it possible for them to live independently. Nearly 60% of the respondents currently gave their communities a "C" or lower rating for having dependable and accessible public transportation.

Inadequate health insurance coverage is at the top of a list of problems experienced by persons 50 and older with disabilities. This is even true for those with Medicare coverage, which does not pay for prescription drugs. In addition, one out of three reported specific needs, such as for assistive equipment that were not covered by health insurance.

Based on the "Beyond 50" findings, AARP outlines a number of proposals for critical long-term improvements:

- Individuals must be insured against the high costs of long-term supportive services. Ways must be found to share the risk of these unpredictable costs more widely among public and private sources.
- Public funding for long-term supportive services needs to be reoriented toward more options for home and community-based care. The nation also must provide more options for "consumer-direction" in publicly funded programs. [See article on next page, *Study Documents Benefits of Self-directed Care*.]
- Communities need to be made more physically accessible for more people with disabilities.
- Information and services need to be more navigable for those who are trying to learn more about available long-term services and whether or not they are eligible.
- America's health care system must adjust its focus to enhance functioning and health-related quality of life, not just provide acute and curative care.

This first of its kind report, by AARP's Public Policy Institute, is based on a September 2002 telephone survey of 1,102 persons with disabilities over age 50, and an AARP-conducted review of previously published data and literature, and an analyses of the National Long-Term Care Survey and the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to making life better for people 50 and over. More information can be obtained from their Web site at <www.aarp.org>.



Study Documents Benefits of Self-Directed Personal Care

Medicaid recipients with disabilities who direct their own supportive personal assistance services were significantly more satisfied and appeared to get better care than those receiving services through home care agencies, according to initial findings of a demonstration project jointly supported by the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The study also showed that with self-direction, unmet needs for care were reduced and health and safety were not compromised.

The Cash and Counseling demonstration project that involves both elders and younger adults with disabilities is being tried in Arkansas, New Jersey and Florida. The study announced on April 15 contains findings from the Arkansas program, which was the first to be implemented. The study compared randomly selected, voluntary participants directing their own care with a control group of those who had to rely on traditional agencies. Medicaid beneficiaries who receive supportive services from agencies "often have little control over who provides their care, when they receive it, or how it is delivered. For some, this lack of control over basic, often intimate,

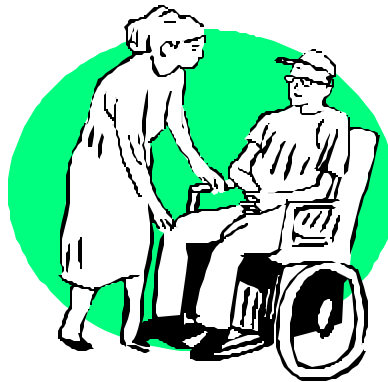
assistance leads to dissatisfaction, unmet needs and diminished quality of life," says the report.

Self-directed care "... gives people with disabilities more freedom and responsibility, in the same way that all of us want to be in charge of our lives and our choices," said HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson. "It lets the individuals themselves decide how best to use the Medicaid dollars they are already entitled to." Approaches like this can also make Medicaid more cost-effective.

"These approaches are especially important in light of the President's New Freedom Initiative, in which he has directed government to do more to help people with

disabilities to live at home and avoid institutionalization," said Tom Scully, administrator of HHS' Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. In addition, President Bush has proposed changes in the Medicaid program that would give states much more flexibility to implement programs of this kind without needing to obtain special HHS permission.

More information on the Cash and Counseling demonstration program is available at www.healthaffairs.org and at www.umd.edu/aging.



Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- May 1-31 **Cambridge Walks - Art at Your Feet** is a campaign to get people walking and exercising more. Cambridge Health Alliance has teamed up with the Cambridge Arts Council and *New Balance* athletic shoes to provide interesting vistas and prizes including a grand prize of a Walking-Shopping Spree in Cambridge. Find one of the hundred specially marked Golden Shoes hidden around public art installations throughout the City and redeem it for a free pair of *NB* walking shoes. Watch for details to come.
- May 4 **Accessible Cycling Fair** along the Norwottuck Rail Trail in Hadley, MA, 11 am – 4 pm. For more information contact Gigi Ranno at 617-626-1294 voice, 617-626-1448 fax or gigi.ranno@state.ma.us or Marcy Marchello at 413-545-5758 at the Universal Access Program of the Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM).
- May 6 **Fair Housing Month Celebration** sponsored by Cambridge Human Rights Commission, 5 – 7:30 p.m. at Cambridge City Hall, Sullivan Chamber, 795 Massachusetts Ave. Keynote speaker will be Senator Jarrett Barrios.
- May 7 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, a peer support group for women with physical or emotional disabilities and/or chronic conditions meets at The Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, 2 to 3:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. Wheelchair accessible; contact Mary Quinn at 617-354-8807 or woman@braintrust.org for more information.

- May 7 **College Planning night for Parents of Students with Learning Disabilities**, 7:30 pm in the Library Mezzanine of Belmont High School, 221 Concord Ave. in Belmont. A panel of current and prospective students, and representatives from the guidance and special education departments at the high school will discuss issues related to college selection and the application process. For more information contact Jane Dougan at 617-489-3351 or <jedougan@earthlink.net>
- May 7 **Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI) Drop-in group** (information & support) on first Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 5th floor conference room, Kenmore Square in Boston. Call 617-247-6827 for information.
- May 8 **Reception at the Gateway Gallery**, 6-8 p.m. for "The Human Condition: Images of People in Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture," art exhibit running from March 31-June 7. Gateway ARTS is a Vinfen service representing award-winning artists with disabilities. The Gallery at 62 Harvard Street in Brookline is open Mon-Fri 9:00-4:30 and Sat noon -5 p.m. For more information call 617-73-1577 or check their website at <www.gatewayarts.org>.
- May 8 **Benefits of Nutritional Therapy for the Treatment of Mental Disorders**, lecture by Dr. James Greenblatt and support group meeting. Sponsored by Safe Harbor, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public and mental health professionals about the advantages of using nutritional and other natural therapies for the treatment of mental disorders. At Waltham Hospital's DeVeber Conference Center, Hope Ave. in Waltham. For more information call 617-964-5544 or email SafeHarborB@aol.com or check the website at <www.alternativementalhealth.com>.
- May 11 **Die Fledermaus, New England's first live audio-described opera performance** for blind and low-vision patrons will be presented by Boston Lyric Opera and The Wang Center for the Performing Arts at The Shubert Theatre, 3 p.m. Description is presented in between the dialogue of the performance and gives insight into the story line, character development and visual effects. Patrons are encouraged to arrive 30 minutes before curtain for a pre-show description of costumes, scenery and background information. Tickets are \$32 with seating in the left and right boxes. Contact The Wang Center for the Performing Arts at 617-482-9393 voice, 617-482-5757 TTY or <jbien@wangcenter.org> for tickets or more information.
- May 12 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 3rd floor Resource Room, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment. **NOTE CHANGE of DAY (Monday) & DATE.**
- May 13 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software that meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Building 2, Room 143. There is often a guest speaker. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Go to their website at <<http://harvee.billerica.ma.us/mailman/listinfo/boston-voice-users>> and click on Boston-voice-users Archives to find out more about meetings and discussions.
- May 14 **MARCH for Disability Rights! Speak out for Independent Living and Healthcare Justice!** Gather at 11 a.m. on the Boston Common by the pedestrian crossing that goes from the Common across Charles Street to the Public Garden, rain or shine. Hear speakers then march at noon to the State House and visit with legislators. Bring your lunch and your issues. For more information contact Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) at 617-338-6665 voice or 617-338-6662 TTY.
- May 17 **A Voice of HOPE: Healing, Opportunity, Progress, Equality – NAMI Massachusetts Convention** will be at Sheraton Colonial Conference Center in Wakefield, 8 am –5 pm. Keynote speakers and workshops at this state meeting of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) will cover grassroots lobbying, peer education, leadership development, housing, criminal justice, and multicultural diversity issues. Registration is \$15-40. For more information contact the NAMI Massachusetts office at 781-938-4048 or <namimass@aol.com>.

- May 17 **Fishing Derby** on accessible site at Cochituate State Park in Wayland, MA, 10 – 12 noon. For more information contact Gigi Ranno at 617-626-1294 voice, 617-626-1448 fax or <gigi.ranno@state.ma.us> or Marcy Marchello at 413-545-5758 at the Universal Access Program of the Dept. of Environmental Management (DEM).
- May 17 **Sailing at Piers Park in Boston** with Outdoor Explorations (OE) for people with and without disabilities. Under the instruction of a skilled sailor and as part of a team, learn about rigging, knots, tacking and jibing. You will use state-of-the-art keelboats that combine stability with speed. Registration for this full day adventure is \$50. This program is offered again on June 14, August 10 and Sept. 14. For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorexplorations.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>
- May 17-18 **Whitewater Rafting at Deerfield River's Zoar Gap in Charlemont, MA** for teens 13 to 18 years old. Outdoor Explorations (OE) works to challenge perceptions and change lives of people with and without disabilities through shared activities in the outdoors. The organization specifically designs its programs for people of all ages, with and without cognitive, sensory, physical, mental and multiple disabilities. Experience adventure, learn rafting basics and enjoy a journey down one of New England's premier whitewater rivers. Registration is \$150. For more information check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>, call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or email <info@outdoorexplorations.org>
- May 18 **Transition Planning and Introduction to Adult Issues: Employment 101**, presented by Rebecca Pyle, Director of Job Readiness and Job Placement Services for people with disabilities from Jewish Vocational Services. This program from 2 to 4 pm at the Leventhal-Sidman Jewish Community Center in Newton will provide important information for parents to plan for the employment needs of students with disabilities transitioning from school to adult life. For more information or to RSVP contact Susan Wolf-Fordham, 617-542-1993 or <wolffordham@rcn.com>
- May 18 **Accessible Cycling Program for adults at Wompatuck State Forest** in Hingham on the South Shore. A variety of bicycles, tandem bikes and hand cycles will be provided. The fee is \$35 or \$15 if you bring your own cycle. For more information call Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>
- May 18 **Accessible Hiking Program at Walden Pond State Reservation** in Concord. (Date may change; please confirm. See listing above for May 17 Fishing Derby for contact information.)
- May 19 **Open House 5 -7 pm at On the Rise's Safe Haven**, 341 Broadway in Cambridge. On the Rise is a not-for-profit agency that focuses on services to women who are homeless or in crisis and at risk of homelessness. They do not have geographic restrictions or a formal intake process, but this is not a drop-in program. Call 617-497-7968 voice or 617-497-7887 TTY for an appointment. The building is wheelchair accessible.
- May 20 **Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)** monthly meeting on 3rd Tuesday of month, 1-3 p.m. at the State House, Room A-1, in Boston. For more information contact Robert Snierson, Chair, <rsnierson@aol.com> or Mary Lou Maloney at 617-216-5181.
- May 20 **Cambridge Group for Parents with Children on the Autism Spectrum** meets the third Tuesday of each month, 7-8:30 p.m. at the Cambridge Family and Children's Services, 60 Gore Street (new address). For more information contact Christi Papazian at the Autism Support Center, 978-777-9135 or <asc@naarc.org> or check the website at <www2.shore.net/~nsarc>.
- May 21 **Women Maximizing Abilities Now**, (see May 7 listing for details.)
- May 22 **LD/ADHD Consumer Group** for persons with Learning Disabilities/ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is sponsored by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and meets at MRC Somerville Area Office at 5 Middlesex Ave., Suite 302 in Somerville. Business meeting 10 am to 12 noon;

Support Group 12 to 1 pm. For more information contact Jim Fratolillo at 617-204-3854 (voice), 617-204-3847 (fax) or Angelica Sawyer at 617-661-3117 (voice).

- May 28 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Conference Room 2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or to request interpreters. For problems with The RIDE service, call 617-222-5123 voice, or 617-222-5415 TTY.
- May 31 **Accessible Fishing Program at Dunn Pond State Park** in Gardner. (See listing above for May 17 Fishing Derby for contact information.)
- June 1-29 **CCTV's *Cambridge Uncovered* highlights disability and access issues** Program will air in June on Sundays and Thursdays 9-10 pm and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 pm on Cambridge channel 10.
- June 7 **Introduction to Kayaking for teens age 13 to 18 in Marblehead Harbor.** Learn the basics about kayaks, equipment, and paddling strokes in the security of tandem boats. Practice doing a "wet exit" and navigate the harbor while learning about tides, weather and the wind. Cost is \$50. For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorex.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org> This event will be offered again on July 12 and September 20.
- June 10 **Group Evening Paddle for adults on the Charles River in Boston.** For more information call 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY, email <info@outdoorex.org> or check the website at <www.outdoorexplorations.org>
- June 10 **Boston Voice Users** is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software. Meeting time is 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. See May 13 listing above for details.
- June 12 **CCPD Monthly Meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 3rd floor Resource Room, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. with opportunity for Public Comment.
- June 12 **Employment Network Opportunity Conference** – Doubletree Hotel, Portland, Maine, free conference, choose identical morning or afternoon session for employers, business councils, disability-rehab providers, and other key stakeholders to understand the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program. Register online at <www.yourtickettowork.com/calendar> or email <andreastapleton@maximus.com>.
- June 11-15 **Society for Disability Studies (SDS) annual meeting and conference** in Bethesda, MD. The SDS is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization committed to developing theoretical and practical knowledge about disability and to promoting the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in society. Members include social scientists, scholars in the humanities and disability rights advocates. This year's program, *Disability and Dissent: Public Cultures, Public Spaces*, focus on scholarship that addresses the changing nature of disability in the wake of globalization, heightened militarism, and the increasing politicization of local communities. Registration varies from \$88.20 to \$273.20 depending on membership and income level. For more information check the U. of Illinois in Chicago web site at <www.uic.edu/orgs/sds/index.html> or contact Dr. Carol Gill at 312-996-4664 (voice/TTY) or <cg16@uic.edu>
- June 14 **Sailing at Piers Park in Boston** with Outdoor Explorations (OE) for people with and without disabilities. (For details see listing under May 17.)
- June 14 **"REFLECT" - Cambridge Arts Council's 25th annual River Festival**, noon to 6 p.m. along Memorial Drive between Western Avenue and John F. Kennedy Street.
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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations. Examples of our ongoing work include:

- Work with various City departments to ensure **compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** (ADA) and related state and federal disability rights laws;
- Provide free **disability awareness training** upon request for any Cambridge business or nonprofit entity;
- Issue **temporary disability parking permits** to Cambridge residents;
- Cosponsor the **taxi discount coupon program** with the Cambridge Council on Aging; and
- Facilitate additional **accessible parking spaces** through the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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Access**Letter** is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
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51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

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Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/~CCPD

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Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

51 Inman Street, second floor

Cambridge, MA 02139